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**84**th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 11 December 2001, 3 p.m.
New York

*President:* Mr. Han Seung-soo ..... (Republic of Korea)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Sharma (Nepal), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 44**

**The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development**

**Reports of the Secretary-General** (A/56/391, A/56/416)

**Note by the Secretary-General** (A/56/273)

**Draft resolutions** (A/56/L.42, A/56/L.45/Rev.1)

**The Acting President**: I call on the representative of Mexico to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.42.

**Mr. Macedo** (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce to the Assembly the draft resolution contained in document A/56/L.42/Rev.1, entitled "United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala". In addition to Colombia, Mexico, Norway, Spain, the United States of America and Venezuela — the countries whose names appear on the original document — the following delegations have decided to offer their valuable sponsorship of the draft resolution: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

On 29 December 1996, 36 years of internal conflict in Guatemala were brought to an end with the signing of the Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace. That Agreement was the result of a six-year negotiation process under the auspices of the United Nations, and it set in motion a series of political, military, legislative, social, economic, agrarian, ethnic and cultural measures, all of which are part of a broad national agenda for peace.

Since then, in accordance with a decision taken by the parties, the United Nations has played an important role in the verification of compliance with the commitments undertaken by the parties. That, in essence, is the function of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA).

The presence of MINUGUA in Guatemala has been very positive. The parties, and Guatemalan society, have recognized that the United Nations, through its Mission, has contributed certainty and reliability to the process of implementing the peace accords. In Guatemala there is a solid consensus about the need for MINUGUA to remain in the country until 2003.

As can be seen, the draft resolution refers to earlier decisions by the General Assembly, to reports of the Secretary-General and of the Mission, to progress made and challenges involved in the peace process, and

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to the importance that the international community attaches to compliance with the outstanding commitments, within the framework of the new time frame agreed to, which continues to the end of 2004.

The draft resolution also notes that the parties have asked the United Nations to support the peace-building process until 2003. One of the key instruments for the promotion of peace, respect for human rights and verification of fulfilment of outstanding commitments is precisely the work that is being done by the United Nations Mission in Guatemala. The draft resolution would renew the Mission's mandate for 2002 and request the Secretary-General to submit, as soon as possible during the fifty-seventh session, an updated report with recommendations concerning the continuation of the peace-building phase after 31 December 2002.

I would like to bring to the attention of the Assembly the fact that, following yesterday's consultations, the original sponsors have agreed on a change to the text. The first part of paragraph 13 should now read as follows:

> "*Encourages* the Government to implement the recommendations contained in the reports of the Mission on human rights, in particular those related to the systematic impunity for crimes and human rights violations ..."

In short, the words "in view of", which appeared in the original text, are replaced by "those related to". That revision would not change the substance of the original text but would introduce a nuance that, we hope, will allow the draft resolution to gain general acceptance.

Guatemala is a United Nations success story. The parties have shown that they are unequivocally committed to the peace process. Important progress has been made, although challenges remain to be overcome. The sponsors hope that the international community and international organizations will continue to contribute generously by providing financial and technical resources. We are convinced that the Guatemalan peace process is a worthwhile investment.

For these reasons, the sponsors trust that the General Assembly will renew its political support for Guatemala and, at the proper time, unanimously adopt the draft resolution that my delegation has the honour to introduce.

**The Acting President**: I give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.45/Rev.1.

**Mr. Niehaus** (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.45/Rev.1, under agenda item 44, entitled "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development".

I am pleased to announce that, in addition to the original sponsors — Austria, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Ireland, Italy, Nicaragua, Panama, Sweden and my own country, Costa Rica — the following countries have decided to sponsor the draft resolution: Belgium, Belize, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Suriname and the United Kingdom.

The draft resolution attempts to reflect the important progress achieved in Central America in the quest for peace, democracy and sustainable development, as well as to identify the path that is yet to be followed. In the 1980s, war, destruction, poverty, social injustice and hunger prevailed in our fraternal Central American republics. Today, peace reigns in Central America. At present, all of the nations of the isthmus are deeply committed to freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and the preservation of the environment. Today, despite economic difficulties and tragic natural disasters, the region is steadfastly moving forward towards greater economic, political and social development.

It should be pointed out that the progress achieved is the direct result of a change of attitude on the part of the leaders and the peoples of the region. The people of Central America have consciously and resolutely renounced violence. At the same time, we are embracing dialogue, democracy and consensus as fundamental pillars of both human and international relations. The peoples of Central America have rejected the culture of war and embraced the culture of peace. The Central American plan for peace, democracy and development is designed to tackle directly the deep-rooted causes of internal conflict.

We should note with particular satisfaction the achievements with regard to human rights and democracy. It cannot be said today that in Central

America massive human rights violations are taking place or that the democratic will of the peoples is being disregarded.

The preambular part of the draft resolution recognizes the efforts and achievements of the peoples and the Governments of Central America in the search for sustainable peace, the building of true democracy based on justice and reconciliation and the promotion of economic and social development. The draft resolution reiterates the crucial role played by international cooperation in reaching those objectives.

The draft resolution highlights the valuable role of the various Central American cooperation mechanisms and bodies that as a whole promote brotherly relations between the countries of Central America and the rest of the international community.

The draft resolution also stresses the progress achieved in the peace process in Guatemala and the implementation of the Peace Agreements under the auspices of the United Nations Verification Mission. Similarly, it acknowledges the successful process of democratization in El Salvador and the holding of democratic elections in Nicaragua and Honduras.

Nevertheless, the draft resolution recognizes that the building of peace and democracy in Central America is a dynamic and ongoing process that is still subject to serious structural obstacles. In that regard, the draft resolution stresses the urgent need to eradicate extreme poverty, promote economic and social justice, guarantee respect for fundamental human rights and protect the most vulnerable groups and minorities. The draft resolution recognizes that these aspects are potentially destabilizing elements for the region. It also acknowledges with great satisfaction the constructive roles played by United Nations missions in the region, and takes note of the convening last September of the Third Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction.

Furthermore, the draft resolution notes with great concern the serious and harmful effects of an unfavourable economic environment on the economies of the region, as well as its negative impact on the efforts of Central American peoples to achieve sustainable development. In that context, the draft resolution notes that it has not yet been possible to overcome the devastating effects of hurricanes Mitch and Keith, or the earthquakes and droughts that have devastated the region. The draft resolution therefore expresses gratitude for international cooperation and solidarity in connection with these national catastrophes, and takes into account the efforts of Central American peoples and Governments to mitigate the effects of the crises and to reduce vulnerability.

In its operative part, the draft resolution praises Central American efforts to achieve peace and democracy and to promote sustainable development. It also reaffirms the need to continue to improve electoral processes and acknowledges the need to support national and regional efforts to overcome the deep-rooted causes of the crises and armed conflicts that have afflicted the region. It welcomes the results of the meeting of the regional Consultative Group for the Transformation and Modernization of Central America, and reaffirms the importance of the Puebla-Panama Plan for economic development in Mesoamerica and the Declaration of Guatemala II to reduce vulnerability.

Paragraph 8 expresses gratitude for the response of the international community to the national disasters that have afflicted the region, and requests additional assistance to continue to rebuild El Salvador.

Furthermore, the draft resolution welcomes the progress achieved in implementing the Guatemala Peace Agreements, and asks all United Nations programmes and bodies to continue to cooperate in the implementation and verification of the Agreements. It also acknowledges the importance of the Central American Integration System and highlights regional integration efforts.

The draft resolution calls on Central American Governments to comply fully with their international commitments in promoting and protecting human rights, eradicating poverty, modernizing public administration, eliminating corruption and other areas.

The draft resolution takes note of the willingness of the countries of the region to resolve their disputes through peaceful means, and calls on the Secretary-General to offer the greatest possible support to national initiatives to build peace and democracy. The draft resolution concludes by requesting the Secretary-General to submit a new report on this item next year, and by deciding to include the item on the agenda of the fifty-seventh session.

Building stable and lasting peace in Central America requires continuous efforts. Until each and every one of the republics of Central America has reached a satisfactory level of sustainable human development, the situation in the region will remain precarious. As long as some countries in the region have not reached a satisfactory and sustainable level of economic and social development, it will be impossible to consider that peace has been achieved.

Achievements in the area of democracy and human rights must be upheld, broadened and consolidated. We must take effective measures to end the scandalous gap between the richest and the poorest. We must guarantee that the basic needs of the poorest and the weakest are fully met. It is crucial to reduce the vulnerability of our countries to natural catastrophes, and to adopt effective measures for reconstruction and normalization after such catastrophes. We must make greater efforts to guarantee civil safety for our citizens and to avoid the internationalization of criminal activity. The support of the international community, and of the United Nations in particular, is essential for carrying out these tasks.

In that context, the draft resolution that I have just introduced constitutes necessary political support for the region. I would therefore like to recommend that it be adopted by consensus.

**Mr. De Loecker** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries of Cyprus, Malta and Turkey align themselves with this statement.

Today we are addressing an important item, namely, "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development". This is an important issue, and it is also a vast and complex one, for it concerns as many political, economic or cultural systems as there are States involved. It therefore cannot be dispatched with haste, but calls for a global, yet targeted, vision.

As in the past, the European Union wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the quality of his reports on this agenda item. They provide us with the overall picture needed to evaluate progress made and to consider future action. His recommendations are valuable and give us food for thought.

Once again this year, the European Union is pleased to note that the situation in Central America is progressing, despite the grave problems, social inequalities and poverty that remain. The greater part of the region is now in a position to consolidate the progress made towards a peaceful settlement to the various conflicts and towards free exercise of democratic rights and the strengthening of democratic institutions and the rule of law. The orderly elections held in Nicaragua and Honduras attest to that. The European Union attaches particular importance to the need for the populations to be provided with the necessary means in order to participate actively in the democratic process.

The European Union intends to continue to invest its efforts and resources in the economic and social development of the countries of Central America. It is mainly within the San José dialogue, which has been operating for 15 years now, that the European Union and the countries of Central America maintain a dialogue and institutionalized cooperation. In that dialogue, we particularly stress the importance of the regional integration of the countries of Central America. Those countries are themselves aware of the validity of this approach as a means of progressing towards peace, development in all its aspects and the resolution of certain points of contention that still exist between some of the countries, in particular with regard to incidents associated with the demarcation of borders.

In that regard, we welcome the launching of the Puebla-Panama Plan, aimed at promoting the integration of Central America and the southern states of Mexico.

The European Union reiterates its full support for the various initiatives undertaken by the Organization of American States (OAS) to put an end to border disputes. We welcome the positive advances made by Guatemala and Belize in their dialogue, in which the OAS is playing a moderating role. The European Union welcomes the role played by the OAS Verification Mission in the dispute between Honduras and Nicaragua. This has helped considerably to reduce tensions between the two countries. We strongly encourage the OAS to continue its efforts along these

lines, and we congratulate it on its initiatives. We encourage all States to settle peacefully the remaining border disputes.

The European Union's cooperation strategy in Central America is focused on support for democratic States that respect human rights, mainly by consolidating the process of peace-building and democratization in the region, by supporting economic integration and the implementation of common policies, and by strengthening regional institutions and the role of civil society in the integration process. This is the strategy that the European Union supported during the meeting of the Consultative Group held in Madrid in March 2001, which provided an opportunity to examine possibilities for development and integration in the region. Generally speaking, the Union intends to act in the context of efforts made by the international community, and those of the United Nations in particular.

The situation in Guatemala and the activities of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) are a particular priority for the European Union. We support the Secretariat's proposals to extend the Mission's mandate until December 2002, with a view to its completion in 2003. The challenges posed by the implementation of the peace process make it necessary to continue that Mission.

Indeed, much remains to be done in Guatemala: the full implementation of the Fiscal Pact, and particularly of measures to restore a climate of confidence among the population regarding the management of public spending; the fight against corruption; implementation of the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples; the introduction of an integrated rural development plan; replacement of the Presidential General Staff; the substantial agenda of legislative reforms; and so on.

With the extension of its mandate, MINUGUA will be able to assist Guatemala in achieving these important objectives. It is nonetheless clear that the efforts of the international community cannot substitute for national ones. It is therefore essential that not only the State, but also the people of Guatemala as a whole, devote themselves wholeheartedly to advancing the peace process.

The European Union wishes to urge once again the Guatemalan authorities to continue their efforts to ensure full respect for human rights, to combat impunity and to respect their obligations as enshrined in the agenda for the peace process, including the recommendations of the Commission for Historical Clarification. It would like to emphasize the importance of the Mission's report and recommendations in the area of human rights.

The European Union remains concerned by the acts of intimidation directed against human rights non-governmental organizations, members of the judiciary, journalists and individuals; the murders that have been committed; and the presence and activities of illegal security forces and clandestine structures that have been observed this year. The impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of those crimes does no credit to the Guatemalan governmental bodies in their role as guarantor of full respect for human rights. The impunity which they enjoy should be combated, and, in particular, the tolerance, acquiescence or even complicity of certain public officials should be eliminated. The European Union is fully prepared to lend them its support and assistance in their action towards that end.

Finally, the peace process is, unfortunately, encountering further obstacles that urgently need to be overcome. The level of social and human development remains low. The European Union has also recently noted a social and political polarization, which can only have a negative impact on implementation of the agenda. We thus welcome initiatives aimed at launching a dialogue to attenuate this political polarization.

Lastly, the economic crisis is certainly not making things easier, particularly at a time of food crisis such as that being suffered in the east of the country following the recent drought. Once again, the Union is committed to improving its aid and cooperation programmes to assist the Guatemalan authorities to overcome these difficulties.

The elections of 4 November in Nicaragua took place in a positive atmosphere, and we welcome the massive turnout on that occasion. In the view of the European Union electoral monitoring mission, those elections, notwithstanding some minor problems, were free and transparent. They took place in an atmosphere of order and calm. The European Union congratulates President Bolaños on his election and calls on him to take all necessary measures to deal with the problems in the area of good governance and eradication of

corruption, which are preconditions for the development of the country. The European Union hopes that the new President will implement the promised initiatives on reform of the electoral law and the depoliticization of the Supreme Electoral Council.

The European Union welcomes the democratic maturity shown by the Honduran people during the elections of 25 November last. The Union appreciates the administration of the Flores Government, which contributed to consolidating democracy in the country and strengthening the rule of law. We wish the same success to President Maduro, and the European Union will continue to provide Honduras with its full support.

In El Salvador, next January we will be marking the tenth anniversary of the signing of the peace agreements in January. This is a significant event, and it is with great satisfaction that we look back at El Salvador's path to peace. We hope that the last issue still to be resolved — that of the fund for the wounded and war-disabled — will be settled fully and promptly.

The Secretary-General rightly emphasizes that, besides laying the foundations for good governance, it is important to improve other human development indicators and to combat poverty, which has served only to fuel the social and political tensions that ignited the armed conflict. A global strategy must also include actively combating structural inequalities, which have no place in the democracies of Central America. These peoples must build on their successes to move on towards a future of peace, stability and development, which they all planned together and from which all should benefit.

**Mr. Kolby** (Norway): Five years ago this very month, the peace agreements in Guatemala were signed, bringing to an end a conflict that had lasted several decades. This was the last armed conflict in Central America, and it is now evident that viable peace has taken root in the region. The main challenge now facing the nations of Central America is to combat poverty and safeguard human rights. In addressing these issues, they will also be able to count on the continued support of the international community.

The peace agreements in Guatemala were probably among the most comprehensive ever concluded in this kind of context. They were the result of a long negotiating process that aimed not only at ending an armed conflict, but also at changing Guatemalan society in such a way that injustice, as far as possible, could be undone and the social and economic causes of renewed conflict eliminated.

These broad and wide-ranging agreements led to great expectations in Guatemala. Five years might seem a short period of time to complete implementation and to fulfil the expectations of the people of Guatemala. Although significant progress has been made in the implementation of the accords in a number of sectors, much remains to be done. This is particularly true as regards the situation of the indigenous people. Further efforts are required by the Government of Guatemala to ensure the implementation of the Agreement on Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We do recognize the efforts of the Government of Guatemala to have Congress pass a number of important laws related to the implementation of the peace agreements, as regards, inter alia, social, economic, regional and land questions. It is of paramount importance for the successful continuation of the implementation process that all political forces in Guatemala realize that this process is necessary for the development of the country and for the consolidation of democracy. My Government calls upon all political forces in Guatemala to make this issue their own.

The easiest part of the implementation process was probably ending the armed conflict. Unfortunately, this does not mean that violence has disappeared. The culture of intimidation and impunity gives cause for great concern and needs to be addressed most seriously by the authorities.

Since the conclusion of the peace agreements, my Government has supported the implementation process. We will continue to do so next year at approximately the same level as this year and we look forward, together with other friends of Guatemala, to the opportunity of meeting with the Government of Guatemala in February next year at the Consultative Group meeting in Washington. We hope that the Consultative Group meeting will confirm further progress in the implementation process. Part of our support has also been through contributions to maintain the presence of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA). We consider the presence of MINUGUA to be of the greatest importance and therefore support the extension of its mandate until 31 December 2002.

In concluding, let me point to the fact that, earlier this autumn, elections took place in both Nicaragua and Honduras. I congratulate the peoples, Governments and institutions of those countries on the orderly manner in which the election processes were conducted.

**Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I will be very brief, since I fully associate myself with the statement of Ambassador Bernd Niehaus of Costa Rica, who spoke on behalf of our subregional group. I do, however, want to add a few words about the Guatemalan peace process and our hope that the mandate of the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) will be extended through 2002, as reflected in draft resolution A/56/L.42, and until 2003. Guatemala is certainly pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution.

When President Alfonso Portillo was in New York attending the general debate, he had an opportunity to meet with a limited number of representatives of States that have been especially close to the Guatemalan peace process. The meeting was convened to have a frank interchange of views regarding the current status of compliance with the peace accords and to ask for the General Assembly's support in extending the mandate of MINUGUA. As President Portillo pointed out in that meeting, the Government is fully committed to implementing the peace accords. It is also committed to overcoming the obstacles that have impeded more rapid progress in some key areas mentioned in the Secretary-General's reports, circulated in documents A/56/273 of 8 August 2001 and A/56/416 of 27 September 2001.

I would like to express our appreciation for both reports — one on Guatemala, the other on all of Central America. We endorse the general thrust of the overall assessment that is presented to us. Although we disagree with some of the specific observations contained in the reports, we accept that the implementation of the commitments contained in the Guatemalan peace accords has not moved forward as rapidly as we would have liked or as was originally expected, in spite of the important progress achieved. Indeed, perhaps the signatories of the peace accords underestimated the difficulties of promoting as profound a set of transformations as those contemplated, especially when they affected the interests of particular groups.

Even so, Central America in general and Guatemala in particular are experiencing a political, economic and social transformation of historic proportions that will lead to more plural, democratic, participatory and tolerant societies. Progress, as could have been predicted, has not been linear, but a comparison of the image of my country today with that of 1990 leaves no doubt as to how far we have advanced. Armed conflict and persistent violations of human rights have come to an end; the army has been subordinated to civil society; democratic institutions are taking root; the role of women in society has advanced; and there has been marked progress in moving towards a truly multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural society.

Having said all this, one must also recognize, as I stated, that much remains to be done. The difficulties we have encountered in moving ahead on compliance with all the commitments undertaken in the peace accords have been compounded by the serious economic downturn, caused mainly by an adverse international economic environment. Instead of higher standards of living, as foreseen in the peace accords, many families face unemployment and deprivation. In spite of our recent tax reform, we are unable to meet all the financial implications of compliance with some of the commitments. For precisely that reason, we insist on the need for MINUGUA's continued presence and the support of the Group of Friends of the peace process. The worst thing that could happen to us now would be for them to abandon prematurely what must be considered an unfinished project. In other words, our commitment to continue implementing the peace accords, in the framework of the rescheduled timetable approved on 12 December 2000, means that we must continue to have the support of the United Nations.

I wish to conclude by thanking my colleagues in the General Assembly for the support they have been providing to the peace process in Guatemala. I also thank the Secretary-General and his staff for their determination in advancing the process. I earnestly hope that this support will continue, so that when we meet again to consider this agenda item, we will be in a position to report on the consolidation of peace and democracy in Central America, including, of course, in my own country.

**Mr. Rivas** (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to express its thanks to the Secretary-General for the report on the situation in

Central America as well as to the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for the report on human rights in that country.

The report on the situation in Central America shows the essential contribution of the United Nations to the region in the last decade. Peacekeeping operations and observation and verification missions have not only supported peacemaking in Central America but also contributed to the consolidation of its democratic institutions and to respect for human rights.

My delegation would like to highlight the effectiveness of the follow-up work to the El Salvador peace process carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Political Affairs, in particular the monitoring of the outstanding aspects of the peace agreements and the support for the Government's efforts to incorporate some of these issues into a broader development programme. Despite a few difficulties inherent in peace-building, it is a historic accomplishment that the political, social and moral objectives originally set in these agreements are today an essential part of the Salvadoran national heritage, and they deserve the support of the country's people.

We also would like to express our satisfaction at the consolidation of democratic systems in Central America through the organization and holding of general elections in which peace, participation and tolerance have prevailed. There is no doubt that the elections have proved to be effective measures to promote peace, democracy, freedom and development for the citizens of the region.

Also deserving of our recognition is the assistance of the United Nations system in improving the living conditions of the rural populations of the region's countries, as well as the contributions of the World Food Programme in addressing the effects of the serious drought that has afflicted Central America. UNDP and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, along with the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, have supported the efforts of the region to fight poverty and relieve external debt through strategies and initiatives such as the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. Furthermore, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme and the United Nations Population Fund have carried out various actions to improve health care, in particular for those affected by HIV/AIDS.

Central America has been transformed by the progress made in the last decade. Internal conflicts have been overcome through democratic Governments and political, economic and social transformations. Nevertheless, although armed conflict and the continuous violation of human rights have ended, the region must undertake collective efforts to overcome poverty and structural inequalities. We are concerned by the devastating effects, both economic and social, of natural disasters such as the earthquakes, droughts, floods and hurricanes that have taken place in the past year. Of additional concern is the deterioration of the Central American economies, due mainly to an unfavourable international economic environment.

We must urge the Central American Governments to formulate effective policies to reduce the damage caused by natural disasters and the unfavourable economic environment, as well as to protect the most vulnerable groups. These national and regional efforts deserve the solidarity of the international community, whose continued cooperation with the region is indispensable so that the progress of recent years will not be lost and the economic, institutional and social development of Central America becomes irreversible. The countries that are friends of the region, international bodies and international businesspeople and investors must commit themselves fully to this goal.

Colombia has supported and stood by the peace process in Central America since its beginnings, and has encouraged and acknowledged the efforts and progress made. This is why we know that peace and democracy will not be secure if they are not broadly and consistently supported until development is achieved. A firm and lasting peace requires not only an end to conflict but also economic and social development, as well as universal access to food, housing, education, work and basic public services.

Now, therefore, is the time to renew our commitment and to continue to invest in a peace that interests and involves all of us. International support and economic, financial and technical cooperation to promote economic and social development in the region must continue so that we can complement the efforts of the brotherly peoples and Governments of Central America to consolidate peace and democracy.

Thus, Colombia is sponsoring the draft resolution on the situation in Central America and supports its adoption.

Colombia, as a member of the Group of Friends of Guatemala, acknowledges the important developments in the implementation of the peace agreement as well as the extremely important role of the United Nations, through MINUGUA, in the peace process. Worthy of mention are the progress in human rights with the signing and ratification of various international instruments by the Guatemalan Government, as well as MINUGUA's coordinated peace-building efforts. Nevertheless, the events of recent months put the peace process and national unity at risk. Colombia urges the Government of Guatemala to continue renewing its commitment to the peace programme and urges the United Nations to renew MINUGUA's mandate and to continue its support of the peace-building process in that country. It also calls on the international community to reaffirm its support for peace-building in Guatemala.

Furthermore, all of the actors in the peace process must renew dialogue as soon as possible so that the implementation of the peace programme can continue. In such an ambitious process, it is inevitable that obstacles of various kinds will arise. Overcoming them requires not only the firm commitment of all parties but also that of the international community, which must step up its support for the process.

Colombia is sponsoring the draft resolution that ensures the continuation of MINUGUA in Guatemala as another sign of its firm commitment to the brotherly Guatemalan people and Government, as well as to their efforts to consolidate the peace and plan the development that they deserve.

**Mr. Andino Salazar** (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like, through you, Sir, to thank the Secretary-General for his important report on the situation in Central America, contained in document A/56/416, which sets out the progress achieved by the countries of the region in their efforts to promote peace, freedom, democracy and sustainable development.

My delegation would like to associate itself with the statement made by Ambassador Bernd Niehaus in introducing draft resolution A/56/L.45/Rev.1, which we hope will be adopted without a vote.

The Government of El Salvador attaches great importance to the item "The situation in Central America: procedures for the establishment of a firm and lasting peace and progress in fashioning a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development", a subject that the General Assembly has been considering since 1983 as a result of the armed conflicts that devastated the region in the 1980s, but that have been overcome in the years since then by the peoples and Governments of the region, thanks to the steadfast and decisive support of the international community and the United Nations system.

Acknowledging the qualitative progress that Central America has made in its transition from war to peace, and from peace to democracy and development, we share the assessment of the Secretary-General, expressed in the report, that a number of obstacles remain to be overcome in order to strengthen institutions so as to ensure the consolidation and proper functioning of democracy, the rule of law and sustainable development, which in turn will help to achieve greater regional integration for the benefit of the peoples of Central America.

As for my country, the Government of El Salvador is pleased to note that its efforts to strengthen its institutions, ensure the safety of its citizens and consolidate the important pillars of the peace agreements — such as the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office and the National Civil Police — have been acknowledged by the Secretary-General in his report.

The situation in El Salvador and the changes that have taken place in the other countries of the region — especially Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala — confirm that there is a new reality in Central America today, reflecting deep changes in the social, political, economic, institutional and security situation. Nevertheless, new challenges have developed for the peoples and the Governments of Central America, primarily because of their vulnerability to natural disasters. This year alone there were two powerful earthquakes in El Salvador — in January and February — and a protracted drought, which worsened the agricultural situation in the region and endangered the food security of large segments of the rural population.

Independently of the impact of natural disasters and other outside factors, in the political arena the

countries of Central America have continued to show signs of their willingness to continue to strengthen their democratic systems through what the Secretary-General has called "second-generation" electoral processes. In this context, free and transparent elections took place last year in Nicaragua and Honduras, on 4 and 25 November, respectively. I am pleased to congratulate the peoples and the Governments of both countries for the true civic example that they have set, the success of the election process and the broad participation of the electorate, which will help to strengthen democracy and establish a good model for the countries of the region.

The countries of Central America are aware of the urgent and imperative need to move forward in the process of achieving sustainable development in the region. Thus, within the context of the work of the Regional Consultative Group for Central America, which met in Spain in March 2001, the Governments of the region put forward the Madrid Proposal, a strategic framework for the transformation and modernization of Central America in the twenty-first century.

One of the objectives of that Proposal is to promote development and improve living conditions through sustained economic growth and the more equitable distribution of wealth. The Madrid Proposal focuses on reducing social, economic and environmental vulnerability, transforming the productive sectors and ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources and greater participation on the part of civil society in the development process. It has led to the creation of 34 concrete major-impact projects, including those relating to the fight against poverty; the Central American logistical corridor; the Meso-American biological corridor; support for small and medium-sized businesses; and the provision of electricity and gas pipelines.

It is important to point out that the countries of Central America have, by consensus, identified this endeavour as a means of deepening, consolidating and speeding up the regional integration process, thereby contributing to the achievement of sustainable development, a subject that has been widely discussed by the peoples and the Governments of Central America.

The strategy to transform and modernize Central America for the twenty-first century is the main strategy for regional development for the next 20 years and, as such, it includes other important initiatives, such as the Puebla-Panama Plan, a regional project designed for Central America that will have a considerable positive impact on business in the region. Central American businesses will, as a result, have access to a world-class logistical trade network, with a reduction in production costs, improved delivery times for shipping merchandise and greater security in cargo transportation. The logistical corridor will thus act as a catalyst for regional and economic integration and attract foreign investment.

The Governments of Central America believe that the success of the Madrid Proposal will depend on the efforts and financial support of the international community. Some support has already been provided, and we would like to express our gratitude for that. However, we would like to appeal for that important support to continue, since, as we all know, the international economic crisis has worsened as a result of the negative impact that the terrorist attacks against the United States of America have had on various sectors — in particular tourism — and on levels of employment, which in turn affects family remittances. Taken together with the drop in international prices for the main agricultural exports, including coffee, this development is harming the chances of recovery in the short term for the economies of Central America and thus making it harder to reduce poverty in the region.

In considering the characteristics of the current international situation, I would like to emphasize three main issues. First, we should not underestimate the impact that terrorism has had, and is continuing to have, on the international economy and, therefore, on the growth and development of countries. We must reaffirm our steadfast commitment to continue the fight against terrorism and related activities on the basis of commitments made in the Declaration of the Presidents, "Central America United against Terrorism", which was signed on 19 September 2001 in the Republic of Honduras. That Declaration expresses the political will of the Governments of the region to cooperate with each other and with other States in the fight against terrorism in all its manifestations, as well as to cooperate with other international bodies, such as the Organization of American States and this world Organization, in eradicating that scourge.

Secondly, we would like to underscore the efforts made in the Central American integration process,

which has taken on greater importance with the inclusion of Belize as a full member of the Central American Integration System (SICA), in December 2000, and with the conclusion of negotiations to include the Dominican Republic as an associated State of SICA. In this context, the Government of El Salvador has taken the initiative to set up binational committees with Central American countries in order to develop with each of country bilateral agendas with concrete action to promote the process of Central American integration.

Thirdly, everyone is aware of the importance of creating and strengthening economic and trade blocs in the context of the new world economy, which is characterized by globalization. In that respect, we have taken steps to formalize free trade treaties with various countries such as Canada, the United States and Panama — a country with which we have made considerable progress in our negotiations. These efforts will make it possible to increase trade flows, which will contribute to the development of our countries and improve the standard of living of our citizens.

Likewise, we must also point out the progress achieved in the process of unifying the customs system among the Republics of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. In particular, we wish to mention the progress made in October 2001, when a common border control entered into force among the four countries in Peñas Blancas, Nicaragua. With this we reaffirmed the importance of consolidating the customs union process in the near future as a mechanism which will make it possible to increase trade and investment among the four countries, and which will constitute a considerable achievement on the road to regional integration.

Moreover, the Governments of Central America are aware of the benefits and obstacles of globalization for developing countries, and of the need to strengthen levels of education, training and leadership to be able to benefit from the opportunities presented by the new information technologies and free trade. It is therefore important that we incorporate the social dimension in economic globalization.

Allow me to refer now to section V of the report of the Secretary-General, the specific part entitled "The United Nations in El Salvador", in which there is an account of positive developments in the implementation and compliance with the El Salvador Peace Agreements in a difficult economic context stemming primarily from the negative effects of natural disasters and the current international economic environment. El Salvador would like to reiterate its thanks to the international community for the valuable support offered to the people and Government of our country in our efforts to fully comply with the commitments made in the Peace Agreements.

In that connection, the Government of El Salvador is pleased to announce that, with regard to the Fund for the Wounded and War-Disabled referred to by the Secretary-General in his report, efforts are being made to agree on a concrete process to develop appropriate and efficient institutional capacity for the Fund in the short term, thereby providing continuity to the spirit of the El Salvador Peace Agreements. The procedure to be agreed upon will no doubt require significant additional funds. The continued support of the international community is therefore essential for this effort to succeed. We will request such assistance in due course.

I would like to mention once again that 16 January 2002 will mark the tenth anniversary of the historic signing of the El Salvador Peace Agreements. As our Minister for Foreign Affairs stated in the general debate of the fifty-sixth session,

> "The Government of El Salvador, as a signatory party deeply interested in faithful observance of the Agreements, has been gratified to see the success achieved in executing these undertakings, putting into practice a constructive policy that has enabled us to deal with sensitive and complex issues. The members of the international community, especially the donor countries and the United Nations, can attest to this." (*A/56/PV.52, p. 4*)

In conclusion, allow me to reiterate the commitment and political will of the President of the Republic, Mr. Francisco Guillermo Flores Pérez, to continue his efforts to consolidate peace, democracy, freedom and sustainable development in our country, as well as to redouble his efforts to promote Central American integration as one of the fundamental pillars for the viability of Central America and its transformation into a region of progress and well being for its peoples, in which conflict will be eliminated through a broad process of dialogue and regional cooperation.

**Mr. Arias** (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Permanent Representative of Belgium has spoken in this debate on behalf of the European Union. My delegation fully associates itself with his statement. Nevertheless, I wish to make some additional comments because of the role Spain has played in recent years as a member of the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General for the Central American countries.

Spain welcomes the exemplary manner in which the elections in Nicaragua and Honduras were carried out in the month of November. We congratulate the peoples and the Governments of the two countries on the organization and smooth development of the elections, and we congratulate Presidents-elect Bolaños and Maduro.

Central American integration continues to be a goal for the region. Its expansion would help the Central American countries achieve greater economic and social progress, strengthen democracy and reinforce their institutions. The meeting of the Consultative Group for the Transformation and Modernization of Central America, which Spain had the honour of hosting in Madrid last March, was a useful instrument for considering prospects for development, integration and democratization in of the region.

Spain will continue to make whatever efforts are needed to facilitate that integration project, as it made clear at the Summit of the Central American countries and Spain, held in Madrid in March 2001, and once again at the Ibero-American Summit held recently in Lima.

Spain encourages the Central American countries to continue their efforts to find peaceful and lasting solutions to disputes that currently affect the region and impede expansion of the integration process. We also welcome the Puebla-Panama Plan, launched by Mexico, which seeks the integration of Central America and the southern states of Mexico.

Next January will mark the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Chapultepec Agreement, which put an end to the conflict in El Salvador and began a peace process that undoubtedly should be considered a model of success for El Salvador and its people, as well as for the United Nations. It is a perfect example of transition from a peacekeeping phase to a peace-building phase, and it deserves the congratulations of all.

Spain continues to fully support the peace process in Guatemala. It is more important today than ever to stress the need to continue and to complete the implementation of the peace agreements. Spain welcomes the commitment to the agreements made by President Portillo and encourages the political parties and all sectors of civil society to continue to be equally committed to their implementation. Dialogue between all actors is undoubtedly an essential factor for continuing to make progress.

Much remains to be done. Spain trusts that the fiscal pact will be implemented, particularly with regard to all that helps promote the population's confidence in the management of public spending.

The United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala must continue, until the end of 2003, to be a useful instrument of the international community's support for the Guatemalan peace process. To that end, my delegation requests the General Assembly to extend its mandate for another year, until the end of 2002.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

I should like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/56/L.42 and A/56/L.45/Rev.1 will be taken at a later date, in order to allow time for the review of their programme budget implications by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee.

**Agenda item 39** (*continued*)

**Towards global partnerships**

**Report of the Secretary-General** (A/56/323)

**Draft resolution** (A/56/L.33 and Corr.1)

**The Acting President**: Members will recall that the General Assembly held the debate on this agenda item at its 37th plenary meeting, on 5 November. In connection with this item, the General Assembly has before it a draft resolution issued as document A/56/L.33.

I give the floor to the representative of Belgium to introduce draft resolution A/56/L.33.

**Mr. de Ruyt** (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of introducing to the General Assembly, on

behalf of the European Union (EU) and all its sponsors, draft resolution A/56/L.33, entitled "Towards global partnerships". In addition to the 59 Member States mentioned in the draft resolution as sponsors, I am happy to inform the Assembly that Azerbaijan, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Lebanon, Mozambique, the Republic of Korea, San Marino, Suriname, Turkey, Ukraine and Uruguay have also become sponsors.

The European Union held a series of informal negotiations open to all Member States. It is happy and proud to submit a draft resolution that enjoys the support and consensus of all delegations. The negotiations took place in a spirit of dialogue. I wish to express gratitude to all the delegations that participated actively and constructively in these meetings. I wish to thank in particular the delegation of Iran, representing the Group of 77, for its unfailing support for consensus and for its positive contribution throughout the negotiating process.

The EU attaches particular importance to discussions about global partnerships with civil society, particularly the private sector. We are convinced that the commitments undertaken at the Millennium Summit can be achieved in 2015 only with the active, positive participation of all stakeholders in globalization — governmental and non-governmental. The general consensus reached on the draft resolution is an encouraging sign of the determination of all Members of the United Nations to recognize this potential both in the area of development issues and in the area of the defence and promotion of the values and objectives set forth in the Millennium Declaration.

The draft resolution we are submitting to the Assembly reflects this balance. Partnerships must serve development and must help eradicate poverty. But they also offer potential for promoting the general values and objectives that we identified in the Millennium Declaration and, more fundamentally, in our Charter.

Furthermore, the intention is certainly not to impose rules that are too rigid on the partnership agreements. But the draft resolution provides a series of guidelines that we believe should form the basis of any partnership. Finally, we wish to stress the need to increase the number of partnerships with private stakeholders in developing countries.

Finally, I wish particularly to thank the Secretary-General for the outstanding quality of the report he submitted to Member States on agenda item 39. It gave us a point of reference and clarified our debate about the definition and the existing types of partnerships; in short, it was the instrument of consensus that brought us together today.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/56/L.33.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/56/L.33?

*Draft resolution A/56/L.33 was adopted* (resolution 56/76).

**The Acting President**: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 39?

*It was so decided.*

**Programme of work**

**The Acting President**: The General Assembly will take up agenda item 14, entitled "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency", on Friday, 14 December, in the morning, instead of on Thursday, 13 December, as originally scheduled, to consider draft resolution A/56/L.10 and the amendment thereto contained in document A/56/L.11.

At the same meeting, the Assembly will also consider a number of draft resolutions under agenda item 20, entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance", and its sub-items, as well as draft resolution A/56/L.48 under agenda item 29, entitled "Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit".

At the same meeting, the Assembly will also consider draft resolution A/56/L.46 under agenda item 35, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

The Assembly will take up item 12, entitled "Report of the Economic and Social Council", on the morning of Thursday, 13 December, instead of Wednesday, 12 December, in the afternoon.

On Tuesday morning, 18 December, the Assembly will take up agenda item 40, entitled "The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina".

On Wednesday, 19 December, in the morning, the Assembly will consider the reports of the Third Committee.

On Thursday, 20 December, in the morning, the Assembly will take up sub-item (f) of agenda item 20, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan", together with agenda item 43, entitled "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security".

*The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.*